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President: Mr. Jan Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Rialuth Serge Vohor, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Vohor (Vanuatu): In addressing this honourable Assembly, I first wish to convey the greetings of the people of the Republic of Vanuatu. Our future will be determined by the nations represented here today.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. You have assumed the presidency during a turbulent period in international relations, and my delegation pledges its full support and cooperation to you, as you guide this noble Organization through this difficult time. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge with deep gratitude the contributions of your predecessor, who so competently steered the work of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly to its conclusion.

I acknowledge with much gratitude and admiration the outstanding leadership and diplomatic skills of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. His outstanding wisdom has made it possible for the United Nations to maintain its credibility and relevance not only in maintaining international peace throughout the world, but also in ensuring that this Organization continues to address the development challenges confronting the world, including Vanuatu.

I am pleased to welcome the Swiss Confederation as a Member of the United Nations. I am looking forward to the imminent admission of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, a nation where Vanuatu was honoured to have participated in the United Nations-administered peacekeeping process.

The deeply disturbing events of 11 September will remain etched in our memories for a long time. On behalf of the Government and people of Vanuatu, I have the solemn duty of conveying to the Government and people of the United States of America, including the families of the innocent victims of 11 September 2001, our sincere condolences for the many innocent lives lost on that fatal day of the most inhuman act of modern history. The barbaric and cowardly acts of 11 September have shaken the foundations and principles on which this Organization is built. They have ushered in a new period of global uncertainty.

Terrorism has become the scourge of our time. This complex phenomenon has scarred our planet. As responsible members of the international community, we must work closely together in order to eradicate it. However, any action of reprisal or punitive measures must receive universal support through established multilateral and international structures, beginning with the United Nations, the most universally

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represented organization. It is very dangerous to take any action outside such mechanisms. We request that all actions undertaken must, above all, serve the purpose of guaranteeing justice, peace and security in the future world.

In particular, we call upon the initiators of a military action against Iraq to show great wisdom and responsibility to ensure that their decisions do not create a new world order of insecurity, hatred and conflict, defined by cultural, ethnic and religious divisions. All actions taken must be consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and established international law.

Although the fight against terrorism has taken centre stage, it must not lead us to forget or to neglect development issues and security concerns inherent to the developing world, in particular, to the small island States. Some resources will inevitably be reallocated to the growing problem of security, but it must not overshadow the development agenda of the developing world. It is in that context that my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made by other Pacific island countries in endorsing the Pacific Islands Forum declarations that have been distributed as a United Nations document.

The recent World Summit on Sustainable Development held in South Africa unambiguously reminded us that much remains to be done in addressing the challenges inherent to the world's many developing economies. The environment and the negative impact of climate change are of extreme concern, and we urge those countries that have not yet done so to ratify the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible. The ratifications of Japan, the European Union, China and Russia have been most welcome.

The aggressive policies of developed countries continue to marginalize many of the world's very small developing economies, such as that of Vanuatu. Binding commitments to international declarations and legislation are the cornerstone of a peaceful and just world in which justice prevails above all. There must be equitable partnerships and cooperation so that we can all contribute our support and confidence.

While small nations, such as Vanuatu, are being forced to comply with conditions imposed by developed countries, some of those same nations decide at the same time to impose policies that encroach upon national and regional positions.

Vanuatu is firmly opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all their forms. In that context, my Government once more unreservedly condemns the ongoing transfer of radioactive materials in the Pacific Ocean. The flagrant disregard for national and regional opposition is a clear demonstration of the policies of the powerful. That negligence is shameful in the light of the many ideals and principles espoused by this Organization and its various entities. Given the recent adoption of the Pacific Islands Regional Oceans Policy at the Pacific Islands Leaders Forum in the Republic of the Fiji Islands, I strongly call on the shipping States to respect the efforts of the Pacific Island countries to safeguard their principal resource: the sea.

The conditions imposed by the powerful with respect to the initiatives of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are another clear demonstration of the game of the powerful, in which we see the big nations manipulating the world order to their own advantage. Those abominable policies affect the very boundaries of national sovereignty for the benefit of the developed countries. We must put an end to all this hypocrisy, if we, the small nations, are to be treated fairly and as equal partners in the international community.

Vanuatu opposes discriminatory policies and legislation which expose our vulnerability to a very volatile global environment. Some of our national efforts to stimulate economic growth are being stifled by the enormous pressure exerted by the club of the rich, which does everything to ensure that their position prevails. Where does that leave us? I must stress this because Vanuatu has done its best to comply with the OECD initiatives, including through legislation to prevent money-laundering and to ensure transparency in financial transactions. Yet, that rich and influential organization continues to put forward further demands. We are ready to negotiate within a time-frame that must first suit our economic and political requirements. But the OECD must, in turn, be ready and able to provide immediate relief and solutions. Any decision by the OECD to blacklist countries such as Vanuatu is premature and unwarranted. It would serve the interests of the OECD alone. Vanuatu is confronted with a dilemma because the countries that introduced the tax-haven policy during the colonial period continue to place unreasonable demands on our already weak economy.

On that note, I must also mention the complicated and extreme difficulties that my country is facing as it struggles through its reform process. Given the established millennium priorities, there is still an acute shortage of financial assistance necessary to effectively implement national development priorities. We have become accustomed to receiving plenty of foreign advice that is, unfortunately, not backed up by real financial support. That has placed an extreme burden on the already scarce resources available in the country. I believe that it is important that our development partners try to better understand the particularities and unique characteristics of not only Vanuatu but also other small and fragile economies of the Pacific islands.

The existing ban on exports of kava to Europe and the United States is another indication of the unfair and discriminatory policies practised by the powerful nations. We expect that other countries will, in turn, join the ban. However, there is no scientific evidence to justify those trade sanctions, which have impacted negatively on the economy of Vanuatu. We therefore seek the support and understanding of the international community in order to allow time for the adequate scientific research to be carried out before such trade restrictions are imposed. Kava products exported to Europe and other destinations are mixed with non-kava products. For the moment, it is completely unfair and discriminatory to impose such a ban.

My Government fully supports the efforts to reform the United Nations system in order to create a stronger and more efficient organization. On this issue, my delegation endorses the position of other delegations on the need to restructure the membership of the Security Council so that it may better reflect the geographical representation and the under-represented groups of Member States without affecting the Council's authority.

The question of Taiwan must also be adequately addressed here. Resolution 2758 (XXVI), adopted by the General Assembly in 1971, resolved the legal and political representation of the People's Republic of China as a Member of the United Nations. Therefore, any attempt by Taiwan to gain admission to the United Nations or to any of its affiliated organs or special agencies will not be supported by my Government. The United Nations must ensure that it does not become involved in the conflict between China and Taiwan, which is a matter totally within China's purview.

I should also like to take this opportunity to mention the problem of West Papua. At the Millennium Summit, the then-Prime Minister of Vanuatu touched on the important matter of the principle of self-determination for the people of West Papua. The question of West Papua has always occupied a special place on Vanuatu's foreign policy agenda. The Charter of the United Nations espouses the principles that continue to guide the Organization's efforts with regard to self-determination. We are completely convinced that, if the United Nations is to be consistent in its decisions to promote recognition and respect of the fundamental right to self-determination, the question of West Papua must be placed on the agenda of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The closed-door policy with regard to the pleas of West Papuans continues to undermine the credibility of the United Nations in terms of its ability to address an essential matter. I think it is in the best interests of the international community that the question of West Papua be revisited. We also request that a commission of inquiry be deployed to verify information on atrocities alleged to have been committed in West Papua.

In conclusion, we must continue to support the pivotal role of the United Nations in efforts to create a just and equitable world. We must stem the growing gap between the developed and developing worlds in order to guarantee economic and social prosperity for all — a critical prerequisite to guaranteeing political stability, peace and security throughout the world. The effective implementation of the United Nations agenda for development, in particular the Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey and Johannesburg Declarations, will advance that process. A more favourable international environment will assist the developmental priorities of developing countries and will address the great economic imbalances prevailing today. True goodwill, respect, tolerance and equality will be necessary if we are to move forward. The role of the United Nations will be crucial in that process, but only if support is forthcoming from its Members.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sudan.

Mr. Ismail (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to express my sincere

congratulations, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. We are fully confident that your renowned diplomatic experience will lead to the success of this important session's deliberations and to the adoption of resolutions and recommendations that are proportionate to the current international challenges. I should be remiss if I failed to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his tireless efforts to revitalize the role of the General Assembly. I should also like to express, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Sudan, sincere congratulations to the people and the Government of Switzerland on its accession to the Organization. In addition, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Sudan, the State of East Timor on its coming admission as a Member of the United Nations.

A full year has passed since the deplorable terrorist events of 11 September, which terrified this city, site of the Organization's Headquarters, where the flags of all our countries fly and where we meet to deliberate on peace, security and justice. The anniversary of the World Trade Center tragedy is an occasion to strengthen international solidarity and resolve to combat terrorism, prompting us to reaffirm our conviction that terrorism is an elusive enemy that knows no religion, ethnicity or homeland. It is a challenge that should be met with a collective international effort. The war on terrorism should be waged with close national, regional and international cooperation and coordination, in conformity with the principles of international law and under the umbrella of the United Nations.

The Sudan, while reiterating its commitment to, participation in and support for the international campaign against terrorism, would like to draw the attention of the international community to the feelings of anxiety expressed in various parts of the world at the derailment of the campaign, whose path and objectives are no longer on target, and at its manipulation by the forces of extremism and advocates of confrontation among civilizations and cultures.

The situation in the Arab and Islamic world in general, and in the Middle East in particular, reflects that anxiety and those feelings. Therefore, we in the Sudan, current Chair of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, reaffirm our rejection and denunciation of that derailment and urge that the international campaign against terrorism comply with the rules of international law. We strongly support the call of His Excellency Mr. Hosni Mubarak, President of Egypt, for the convening of an international conference on terrorism.

The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, submitted to the current session, reflects the desire of the world's countries to strengthen cooperation, to alleviate poverty, to eliminate the debt burden and to resolve conflicts in order to create a world of justice and equality, free of grievances, injustice, hatred, bigotry, double standards, conspiracies and politicization, which run counter to the noble objectives of protecting and enhancing human rights. Sudan reaffirms its firm conviction that the United Nations remains the ideal mechanism for achieving international cooperation. Therefore, Sudan reaffirms its readiness to cooperate fully in all areas with United Nations organs. Based on its conviction, Sudan calls for the revitalization of all United Nations organs and urges that top priority be accorded the Security Council and the General Assembly in that regard.

During the past year, Sudan's relations with the United Nations made great progress, a progress crowned by the important and successful visit of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to Khartoum. The visit was a good opportunity for him to see our country's positive development in all fields. The visit strengthened the cooperation between the Sudan and the international Organization. This year has also seen visits to the Sudan by the Directors-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The Sudan is maintaining good channels of communication and coordination with the United Nations and its specialized agencies through cooperation, on the basis of the fundamental principles of its foreign policy, including the principle of openness at the regional and international levels, and in consonance with its strong commitment to active participation in all activities aimed at carrying out the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The United Nations Charter calls for the important peaceful resolution of disputes and emphasizes the important role of regional organizations

therein. The Sudan is currently presiding over two regional organizations, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In some countries of these two organizations there are conflicts that are the subject of much thought in the world today. IGAD is endeavouring to resolve the conflicts in Somalia and the Sudan. Through the OIC, whose membership includes Pakistan, Iraq, Palestine and Bosnia and Herzegovina, among 57 other countries forming almost one third of the General Assembly, we are sparing no effort to find solutions to serious conflicts at the national and regional levels.

Without resolving the root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict, by ending the occupation, implementing lawful international resolutions, restoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to establish an independent state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, peace, security and stability will not be achieved in this volatile region of the world.

We would like to stress the importance of a political settlement of the dispute between Iraq and the United Nations. In this regard, we would like to spare Iraq and the region the risk of yet another war. As Chairman of the OIC, the Sudan has initiated contacts with the United Nations Secretary-General, the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent Security Council members and the Foreign Minister of Iraq; these efforts were crowned with the unconditional acceptance by Iraq of the return of the inspectors. We commend the brave decision of the Iraqi leadership to allow the return of the United Nations inspectors and hope that this will lead to the lifting of sanctions imposed on Iraq and the consolidation of its security, sovereignty and territorial integrity so as to enable it to regain its active role both regionally and internationally.

The birth of the African Union last year was a great African event, which renewed the aspirations and hopes of the continent for total liberation from the nightmare of conflict, poverty and underdevelopment in order to achieve solidarity, unity, security and comprehensive sustainable development there. We look forward to working closely with the new international organization, the African Union, through the mechanisms established, such as its Peace and Security Council, so that we can coordinate the advancement of our continent through effective bilateral cooperation between the countries and effective regional cooperation with economic groupings and partnerships.

In this connection, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has emerged as testimony to the ability of the continent to initiate and coordinate initiatives among African countries. It also reflects the sincere desire of the continent for cooperation through this initiative, with its clearly stated socio-economic priorities. The various regions of the continent have also determined their priorities in the fields of infrastructure, energy, environment, communications, education, health and primary care. I call upon the international community to support Africa through this new partnership so that it will attain its aspirations. We also call on Africa to speak with one voice regarding the follow-up and implementation of NEPAD through the mechanisms of the African Union, our collective organization.

With regard to developments in my country, I have the honour to inform you of the latest endeavours to resolve the conflict in southern Sudan. I would recall that my Government has always considered the issue of peace and ending the war in the southern part of the country a priority and a strategic objective. This stems from our conviction that national peace leads to regional peace, which in turn leads to international peace, to which we all aspire. My country has spared no effort to find a solution to the root causes of the conflict. To that end, we have organized national conferences and meetings, and we have also responded positively to the various regional and international efforts aimed at ending the conflict. Against this background, and under the auspices of an IGAD initiative led by Kenya and the efforts of intermediaries, the Government and the Rebel Movement have signed on 20 July of this year the Machakos framework agreement. This agreement was widely acknowledged as a step towards eventual peace, supported both inside and outside the country. However, the rebel movement has set that progress back with its insistence on military activities and on re-opening issues already agreed upon during the first round of talks. This regrettable development forced the Government to suspend the negotiations.

My Government believes that it is meaningless to continue military activities after signing the peace protocol. My Government will continue to fulfil its responsibility for protecting our territorial integrity and national security and for seeking solutions to the dire

humanitarian situation of our citizens affected by the military activities of the rebels, as well as its responsibility to secure peace and stability for all citizens.

While I am setting out the important political and constitutional developments in my country, let me stress my Government's policy of consolidating democracy and promoting human rights in Sudan, particularly after the positive steps taken in the areas of political freedom and freedom of the press. This course of action opened the door wide for the participation of all our citizens at the national level.

Sudan's foreign policy with regard to international and regional organizations has been guided by a clear vision based on well-defined principles — namely, openness towards others, effective participation in all international and regional forums and constructive dialogue based on objectivity and transparency. Inspired by these positions of principle, Sudan looks forward to playing a constructive role on issues of regional cooperation in Africa and among its neighbours. Sudan is well qualified to play such a role because of its unique geopolitical situation and its human and natural resources. With this policy, Sudan's relations with its African and Arab neighbours have witnessed successful breakthroughs in economic cooperation, mutual trade and strategic partnerships.

The same applies to our interaction with the United States, which is now entering its third year. The American-Sudanese relationship has witnessed some positive developments and our relations, which were ruptured, have progressed to the point where the United States is fully involved in efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement in the Sudan.

We are fully cognizant of the political and economic weight of the United States, as well as its effective role in all regional and international issues. As such, we are keen to further enhance balanced relations with the United States. Armed with faith in our just position with regard to the pending issues between the two countries, we remain confident that our relations with the United States will progress in the near future and will be characterized by cooperation, as long as both sides continue to remain committed to a policy of dialogue rather than confrontation.

We are also confident that an in-depth dialogue will lead us to consolidate trust between the two countries in a manner that will spare us the bitterness of the past. The unfortunate case of the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant, which was falsely alleged to produce chemical weapons, bears witness to the significance of such a confidence-building process.

The end of the twentieth century witnessed many wars and conflicts that preoccupied the international community. The negative impact of globalization continues to widen the gap between the countries of the North and the South. Although considerable progress has been achieved in international cooperation thanks to qualitative improvements at the United Nations and the commendable role played by its Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, some issues and challenges continue to preoccupy the conscience of the international community. For this reason the reform process of the United Nations, especially as regards the Security Council, remains imperative.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, His Excellency Mr. Hassan Wirayuda.

Mr. Wirayuda (Indonesia): On behalf of the Indonesian delegation, I am pleased to congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. We are sure that with your wise and skilful guidance our deliberations will be fruitful.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend Indonesia's warm welcome and congratulations to the newest Member of this world Organization — Switzerland. We look forward to extending a similar welcome to East Timor when it joins our Organization in the days ahead.

In November 2001, from this same podium, I asserted that in order to wage an effective struggle against the multiple threats and challenges confronting humankind, we must imbue ourselves with the democratic spirit. Without that spirit, we can only fail.

In the relations and interactions among nations, the democratic spirit is put into practice through multilateralism. Multilateralism exists when a group of nations adopts a set of goals and each individual member is equally responsible for the achievement of those goals. It entails respect for one another's sensitivities and points of view, and therefore requires discussion and the forging of consensus. For the value

of each nation, no matter how small or how poor, is equal to that of any other.

To my mind, the ultimate form of multilateralism is a United Nations with a General Assembly already revitalized, a Security Council that is truly representative of the United Nations membership, and a streamlined Secretariat that is responsive to the needs and interests of all Member States.

Nowhere is the necessity for multilateralism more glaring than in our response to the scourge of our time: international terrorism. And nowhere else is the role of the United Nations more vital.

The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in this city and in Washington were not only an attack against the United States but also an attack against civilization and all human values. Therefore, the coalition that responded to these attacks had to represent all of humanity — all nations, religions and cultures.

For those reasons the United Nations was actively involved in the response to the attacks and must maintain a pivotal role in the response of the world community to the persistent threat of international terrorism; otherwise, in the long run, that endeavour will fail.

The same is true of our efforts to advance the disarmament agenda, which is also imperative. Until the States concerned rid themselves of their arsenals of mass destruction — whether nuclear, biological or chemical — the danger remains that much, if not all of the human race, could be wiped out in a single holocaust.

In accordance with the multilateral principle of equality, States should no longer cling to the privileges derived from military superiority over others.

Multilateral affirmative action can also bring about peace, where for many years there has only been violence and bloodshed. In the Middle East, the Powers that wield great influence on the region are called upon to adopt a just and balanced approach to the issue of Palestine. They can, if they wish, persuade Israel to withdraw its forces from the occupied territories and to cease settlement activities in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

That will help pave the way for the realization of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side within secure internationally recognized borders. Only then will peace have a real chance.

In this context we note with interest the communiqué issued yesterday by the Quartet on the Middle East outlining a roadmap to realize such a vision.

Elsewhere, it is important to recall that the situation in Iraq has been an issue that has occupied the Security Council for some time. Hence, while over the past weeks we have witnessed an intensification of the international focus on this issue, we must not lose sight of the fact that mechanisms already exist within the United Nations system to address the issue. In tackling the present challenge, Indonesia deems it necessary that peaceful efforts be fully exhausted and existing United Nations mechanisms be fully utilized, and, if need be, strengthened.

Any unilateral use of force risks not only undermining the authority of the United Nations, but would also carry the grave potential of destabilizing the immediate region, and indeed beyond, with its attendant humanitarian implications.

For its part, Iraq must fully comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions. We are encouraged by the recent decision by the Government of Iraq to allow the return of United Nations inspectors. We trust that this will pave the way to a peaceful solution of the problem and preclude any attack against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

The situation in Iraq cannot be viewed in isolation. How we address this problem will have repercussions on the longer-standing issue of Palestine and the challenge of terrorism.

In Afghanistan, the United Nations has done commendable work in helping the Afghan parties manage the post-Taliban transition. The international community must now help the Afghan people in nation-building, rehabilitating the country's infrastructure and strengthening its newborn Government.

In the long run, the war against terrorism can only be won if we emerge victorious in a more basic struggle — the one against poverty. The substantial eradication of poverty, in fact, is what the development goals of the Millennium Declaration all boil down to. As reported by the Secretary-General, the world

community has made some progress in this endeavour, with East Asia recording the most significant gains.

We still have a long way to go, however, before we can meet the goal of reducing by one half, between 1990 and 2015, the number of people living on less than a dollar a day.

If the Millennium goals will be met at all, a major factor will be the achievement of an international trade regime where unilateral practices and protectionism have given way to genuine multilateralism. Hence, we trust that the forthcoming negotiations mandated by the Fourth World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference at Doha last year will make possible the full integration of developing countries into the multilateral trading system. Much also depends on whether the pledges made in Monterrey at the International Conference on Financing for Development could be fulfilled and then exceeded.

Earlier this month, the World Summit on Sustainable Development reached agreement on a global programme to reduce poverty and restore the integrity of our planet and formulated a blueprint for switching to a more efficient use of carbon fuels and renewable sources of energy. Despite the lack of a timetable, the fact remains that we have an action-oriented plan of implementation to be carried out by a global partnership of governments, private business and civil society.

A factor that can work against our hopes is a unilateralist trend so apparent at the global level. In the face of that trend, it becomes even more necessary and desirable that regional organizations grow in strength and share some of the burden that is now borne by the United Nations. This role was envisioned for them even when the world organization was still being established more than fifty-seven years ago.

In general, regional organizations strictly adhere to a multilateral regime, and at that level many global problems are so much more manageable. It may therefore be highly advisable to find ways and means of further promoting the natural synergy between the United Nations and regional organizations. A good example is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Indonesia is a founding member. For many years now, we in ASEAN have been working with United Nations bodies to the considerable benefit of our peoples. It is in this spirit that we, the ASEAN countries, are sponsoring a resolution in the General Assembly on strengthening the working relationship between our regional organization and the United Nations system.

Long before the 11 September attacks, a regional programme to combat terrorism and other transnational crimes was an integral part of our ASEAN functional cooperation. In the face of the surge of this global threat, ASEAN has set in motion a work plan to implement the 2001 ASEAN Declaration on Terrorism and Transnational Crime.

We believe, however, that it is the totality of ASEAN's work that will decisively overcome not only terrorism but also the basic problem of poverty in our region. Since it was founded in 1967, ASEAN has tirelessly promoted political, economic and social development cooperation among its members. The result has been three decades of relative peace and unprecedented economic growth, interrupted only by the Asian financial crisis of 1997. To forestall the recurrence of such a devastating crisis, we have taken bold steps toward regional integration. Through this approach, we hope to achieve our vision of an ASEAN that is at peace within itself and with others, an ASEAN that is technologically competitive with the rest of the world and, through sustainable development, has reached, for our part of the world, the Millennium Development Goals.

From the time of its inception, ASEAN has been much criticized for its preoccupation with consultations and consensus-building, which seem to delay action when swift action is needed. I am not troubled by this criticism because I regard it as an affirmation of ASEAN's adherence to the multilateral ethos. Multilateralism gives ASEAN coherence, commitment and perseverance in the pursuit of its goals. That is why it has been an effective catalyst for the promotion of security and economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

At the national level, Indonesia has been similarly doubted: it is said that reform legislation has been lagging because of dithering and interminable debate. Moreover, in some international circles, Indonesia has been portrayed as less than fully enthusiastic in the global fight against terror on the basis of a mistaken perception that it is lenient with radical Muslim groups.

And yet, after all the necessary debates, we did take large strides toward further democratization. Our parliament recently endorsed several amendments to

our Constitution: the adoption of a system of direct popular election of the President and Vice-President, the adoption of a bicameral system of legislature, and the abolition by 2004 of the 38 seats reserved for the military and police in the legislature.

A proposal for the adoption of the Shariah or Muslim law in our legal system did not obtain support. The proponents graciously and democratically accepted this reality and bowed to the decision of the people's representatives and to the force of public opinion. This reflects our common commitment to democracy.

We will adhere to the democratic process even in addressing serious threats to our national security, such as the separatist movements in the provinces of Aceh and Papua and the disruptive communal strife in the provinces of Maluku. On Aceh, we are prepared to resume negotiations with the Free Aceh Movement, provided the Movement drop its separatist demand, cease resorting to terrorist tactics and accept the law on special autonomy as a final political solution to the problem. At the same time, we shall continue to provide protection to civilians from terrorist attacks that disrupt public order and cause much suffering.

We have also applied special autonomy to the province of Papua, which guarantees protection of the cultural rights of the people, a just and equitable share of the resources for development, and redress of legitimate grievances. In the provinces of Maluku and North Maluku, communal strife has greatly abated with the signing of two peace agreements between the factions and the holding of reconciliation dialogues. The main task now is to build goodwill among the communities and help thousands of internally displaced persons return home and start a new life.

In many of our endeavours at political, economic and social reform, we have been supported by United Nations organizations, funds and programmes. We are therefore deeply grateful to the Secretary-General for his intention to enhance United Nations efforts to assist Indonesia in promoting good governance and in establishing a stable, democratic and prosperous society.

Thus at the national level, we have committed ourselves to the processes of dialogue, wide participation and accountability, which are all inherent in a democracy, just as we stand for multilateralism in international affairs. We are committed to promote and protect the individual rights of our citizens, just as we have always advocated that every nation, no matter how small or powerless, must have a voice in international affairs.

At the same time, however, we affirm that democracy is not merely the breaking of chains and the enjoyment of rights. Whoever would truly be free must bind himself to the duties and obligations that match and give meaning to his rights. Every individual has responsibilities to the community that nurtures him, just as every nation has responsibilities to the community of humankind, including the responsibility to respect the views of all other members of that community. This is the fundamental meaning of multilateralism.

In the ultimate analysis, this is all we need to address the challenges of our time and make a more peaceful, more just and more prosperous world: that we all be sincerely responsible to one another, for one another and for the planet that is our only home in this life.

The President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, His Excellency Mr. Shimon Peres.

Mr. Peres (Israel): I would like to congratulate my friend Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to wish him success. I also thank the Secretary-General for his leadership and his dedication to right what is wrong and to light the lamps of hope.

The eleventh of September gave rise to a new world. We find ourselves facing a new confrontation: borderless, merciless, indiscriminate and inhumane. The target this time was the United States — a United States that in the past helped so many nations defend their freedoms and their liberty. Now the United States has been challenged again to defend our freedom by protecting its own and to safeguard our lives by securing its own.

The attack on the World Trade Center precipitated a new division in our epoch and in the years to come — a divide created by groups that preach and cause death and agony. On the wrong side of the divide are those who are trying to destroy the free world, which is diversified and heterogeneous, cherishing the right to every thought and religion as well as the principle that every human being has the right to be different and yet to prosper and live in security.

The front from Bin Laden to Saddam Hussein is a menace to us all. It will not enable peace, nor will it permit freedom — for all people or for their own people. In countries that harbour terror, women are discriminated against, men are oppressed, civil and human rights are violated, and the poor cannot escape from their poverty They force us to defend our inalienable right to look ahead with hope. They imposed on us a war of self-defence — the defence of pluralism and of the promise of science. They reject the incredible technologies that may carry us from the limits of land to the discovery of uncharted provinces. The culture of death forces us to defend the culture of life, to win battles that we did not initiate, to triumph in this uninvited war.

We never imagined that it could be dangerous to walk our streets, to fly our skies, to breathe the air or to drink the water. We cannot agree to this. We cannot allow dark forces — which, as we are aware, could destroy the lives of innocent people on a whim — to possess weapons of mass destruction. We shall not turn our lives into a series of sleepless nights and nightmarish days.

We do not have the right to ignore the danger. We do not have the option to postpone it; it is imminent. We have to win as soon as possible.

Terror is destined to lose. It will be defeated because it carries no hope. It respects neither human beings nor the values of humanity.

Science and technology made the economy global, and science and technology globalized terror as well. Now strategy also is globalized, because ballistic ranges have replaced geographic distances, because non-conventional warheads have replaced measurable explosives, because terrorism transcends frontiers and fronts. Terrorists do not respect the rule of law. They do not answer to independent judges or relate to elected leaders. They mock international lines. They destroy universal norms. They shed blood. They introduced dullness and stopped affluence. Nothing is to be expected from them but death.

Terror creates poverty more than poverty creates terror. Terror leads to backwardness. We have to offer the economic potential to open prospects and horizons for all nations, poor and rich. New opportunities can bring enfranchisement. We have to close ranks to prevent distorted dreams from becoming a raging typhoon that reaches all four corners of the globe. We have experienced in our own country the terrible effects of terrorism.

Babies were shot in the arms of their mothers. People at prayer were killed while praying. Yes, it hurt us, but it did not change our goals. We mourn, but we did not bury peace.

It harmed the Palestinians in the United States and in other countries. It prevented the occupation from ending. It introduced additional problems and did not solve a single existing problem.

Alas, the Middle East is still replete with national, religious and territorial disputes. The land is small; the agony is great. But the real tragedy is that without terror we could already have resolved these disputes. Terror entrenched them. Terror changed priorities — security before policy. It affected resources — arming young men, for example, instead of desalinating vital water. If it continues, battlefields will create deserts of sorrow and days of darkness. Campuses of learning will be replaced by camps of violence.

But this is neither a decree of heaven nor the verdict of man. It can, it should, it will be different. South Africa, Ireland, Yugoslavia and the Congo achieved more by talking than by shooting, more by dialogue than by dispute. We offered the Palestinians a comprehensive solution without the terror — a solution that was close to their national aspirations. We related to their desire to be free, to be equal, to be independent. We agreed that they would have their land in accordance with United Nations resolutions. But terror postponed their destiny. Terror postponed our willingness to end control over their lives. Smoking guns replaced the torches of peace.

Now we are following the profound debate taking place among the Palestinians. We respect it, because debate is the beginning of democracy. When democracy prevails, peace undoubtedly will arrive. The Fatah organization apparently issued a call that contains some new approaches. I shall quote one of them:

> "We will build an independent State of Palestine and a political system in accordance with the principles of democracy, the rule of law, with an independent judicial system, separation of power, respect for human rights, civil liberties and a market economy."

We look upon these words as the dawn of a different season; we hope that it is spring. Reducing violence will shorten political distances. Political horizons are, in my judgement, within reach. Israel accepts President Bush's vision. That vision is supported by the Quartet; it is endorsed by Arab countries; it outlines a political goal and a timetable. It can be considered as both a road map and a calendar. What is needed now are wheels to propel the vehicles of peace. An economic wheel is needed in order for us to move to a global market economy that leads to science-based industry. A market economy can open gates and skies. An ecological wheel is needed to let air and water flow cleanly. Pollution is not national; we have to work together to control it. Ecology has changed history. In the past, bloodshed was about real estate, and real estate created divisions, demarcation and, unfortunately, wars as well. In our era, the battle is not for real estate but for air, for water and for energy; it is about the fertility of the land, rather than its size. "Non-real" estate is not marked, nor can it be divided. Either we respect it unanimously, or we will be victimized by its loss.

Then there is the cultural wheel. Three civilizations were born in the Middle East. They were made manifest in the Bible, in the New Testament and in the Koran. We read them in different languages, yet we pray to the same heavens. The descendants of Abraham should behave like a family — with tolerance and solidarity. Spiritual leaders should pray for peace, but they also need to preach it, call upon it and contribute to it.

The political wheel should not rotate in the same misguided orbit as in the past. We have been through five wars in five decades — Palestinians, Egyptians and Jordanians lost generations of young people. We paid heavily with young blood as a result of three terror campaigns. The time has come to comprehend that the real triumph is in the harvest of peace, not in the seeds of another war. When we replace the war maps with peace maps, we will discover that the differences were minimal. The wars were appalling. We shall see that the promised land could have become the land of promise a long time ago.

Without wars, our region will be able to bloom again. We can separate politically into two States and coordinate one economy. That will enable us to take advantage of the exceptional invitation that came from both the United States and a united Europe to partake in their economic opportunities.

Tourism can flourish when terrorism has ended. Islands of high-tech excellence can be established. Millions of trees can be planted to produce a new climate. We can make green our arid lands. We can become contributors, not dependants.

The call of the future cannot be harmonized with the voices of the past. Only new solutions can evoke a grandeur equal to the past. We do not have the right to suspend it in the face of our children. Young Israelis and young Palestinians are entitled to a new life — a life of their own. While fighting terror, let us not fight people. While seeking freedom, let us not extend subjugation.

I should like to direct a comment to Syria. The same principle that enabled us both to participate in the Madrid conference a decade ago is still valid.

A word to Lebanon: Israel is committed to the territorial integrity of Lebanon. Israel respects its need for real political independence. Lebanon should not permit Hezbollah to destroy its own country. Hezbollah is not a party, it is a dangerous agenda. Lebanon should immediately free Israeli prisoners and prisoners of war.

The people of the Middle East should let bygones be bygones. Let us return to our traditions, where prophets, not terrorists, told the future. Let us return to our landscape, where the blue skies did not surrender to the heavy clouds of despair; to a time when justice promised equal opportunities for individuals and for nations. Let us join, together, the march of mankind towards new discoveries that will make life more purposeful and may bring security to posterity.

We were born in the cradles of hope, not in the tombs of despair. We guard our spiritual heritage, and it is not antithetical to building a new Middle East. The world is new.

I should like to conclude with an old verse from our scriptures:

> "The Lord led Adam through the Garden of Eden and said to him, 'All I created, I created for you. Beware lest you spoil and destroy my world, for if you spoil it, there is no one to repair it after you'."

We are here to repair.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hor Namhong, Senior Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia.

Mr. Hor Namhong (Cambodia) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to join other speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. We are fully confident that, under your able leadership, the work of the General Assembly will further advance the cause of international cooperation in the interests of humankind.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Swiss Confederation, which has become the one hundred and ninetieth Member of our world Organization. I am also pleased to extend a warm welcome to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, which will soon be joining our global Organization.

I believe that we are living in a fragile and fast-changing world, a world of uncertainties and turbulence that has been seriously threatened by terrorism, the negative aspects of globalization, the rising effects of global warming and the impact of climate change. The effects of these rising forces underline our common vulnerability and recall the urgent need for more effective sustainable development in the world, without which the survival of humanity may be jeopardized. I therefore believe that the common challenge we face today is perhaps the lack of collective wisdom and political will to make our world a better place for all, including future generations.

The recent World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg rightly discussed the fundamental issues confronting humanity: climate change, global sustainable development and poverty. The dramatic appeal made by many leaders of the world at that Summit must be taken very seriously as an important message about the need to save the Earth from destruction and to reverse the global trends of widening development gaps, increasing poverty and environmental destruction.

With respect to the environment, I believe that humanity as a whole is now confronting severe global warming, unprecedented flooding and the increasingly disastrous effects of greenhouse gases. This is no longer just a scientific theory, but a living reality. For the first time this year, we have experienced mega-floods and serious droughts across continents — from Asia to Europe, from Africa to South America — that have wrought immense destruction and cost billions of dollars. We must seek to reverse these negative trends for the survival of humanity. In this regard, I think that we should all welcome and strongly support the bold message of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the ultimate goal of which was to ensure the survival of humanity and to fight poverty and environmental destruction.

I also wish to recall the 2000 Millennium Declaration, which centred on fighting poverty, combating HIV/AIDS, ensuring sustainable development and forging a common partnership for development. In the same vein, the United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development, held in March in Monterrey, Mexico, called on the developed countries to provide greater assistance to the least developed. Without adequate resources, it will be difficult for the least developed countries to break out of the vicious cycle of poverty and to catch up with the current process of globalization. I believe that this is a question not of generosity, but of human dignity and of sharing the wealth of the world in which we all live in the most equitable way.

(*spoke in English*)

As the world continues to be shaped by the forces of globalization, we are witnessing growing disparities and development gaps between the haves and have-nots. As a double-edged sword, globalization could either help to propel humanity as a whole to greater prosperity or further marginalize the poor. I believe that reducing poverty could contribute to some extent to the fight against terrorism and effectively manage the growth of transnational issues, such as human trafficking and the prevalent HIV/AIDS epidemic.

In this context, the Cambodian Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen, has made the fight against poverty a top priority of its strategy. In addition, human rights and democracy in Cambodia have been further strengthened. In February this year, Cambodia for the first time organized free and fair local elections as part of its decentralization policy and its efforts to strengthen grass-roots democracy. Moreover, Cambodia remains committed to contributing actively towards the realization of integration of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), so

that ASEAN may move forward in a collective spirit and play its constructive role in deepening East Asian cooperation as a whole. In this regard, the forthcoming Greater Mekong subregion and ASEAN summits in Phnom Penh in early November will be important venues for ASEAN leaders to further promote ASEAN integration and build closer cooperation in East Asia, encompassing the 10 nations of South-East Asia, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

On regional issues that concern the whole international community, I wish to raise the Middle East conflict first. I believe that the international community has to help find a viable solution which could bring lasting peace to the region. Cambodia strongly believes that violence in any form is not a solution. On the contrary, violence provokes more violence. The Palestinian people have an inalienable right to dispose of their own State, living in peace with Israel. I think that both sides must have the wisdom to understand that they are condemned to living side by side forever. Therefore, it is better for both sides to remain at peace with each other than to engage in endless war.

Secondly, with regard to the Iraqi situation, Cambodia believes that Iraq's acceptance of the return of United Nations weapons inspectors is an important step that will certainly contribute to defusing the situation in the region.

Thirdly, on the Kashmir problem, I believe that we need to avoid the escalation of that conflict. If not properly managed, the Kashmir conflict could seriously escalate and thus threaten regional peace and security not only in South Asia, but also in South-East Asia. We must do what we can to ensure that the terrorists cannot seize the opportunity of that conflict to further complicate the present situation.

On a more optimistic note, I believe that the recent positive developments in the Korean peninsula — especially the resumption of North-South dialogue and the historic visit of Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi to Pyongyang — are significant milestones towards the normalization of the situation there.

As far as the fight against terrorism is concerned, Cambodia has signed and is in the process of acceding to all 12 conventions related to the combat against terrorism. ASEAN, for its part, has been forceful and decisive in coming up with a number of initiatives and measures. The ASEAN leaders, at their Seventh Summit in Brunei in November 2001, adopted the ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism. In addition, there have been a number of agreements and specific action plans that ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum have put in place in order to tackle the threats of terrorism in our region. In July this year, ASEAN and the United States signed an anti-terrorism declaration as a framework for more cooperation to prevent and combat global terrorism.

Now, I wish to address the issue of reforming the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, which I believe we should not simply ignore or take a status quo approach to. I believe that the United Nations cannot continue to work in its current modus operandi if we want to further improve this important global institution and to have it truly reflect the needs and political realities of the world in the twenty-first century, to which it should be adapted as soon as possible. Any attempt to further delay United Nations reform, in my view, will only undermine the credibility of this universal institution.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Accordingly, I wish to reiterate Cambodia's call for the expansion of the Security Council to include other new members. In that regard, Cambodia would support Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and India as new permanent members of the Security Council, taking into account the growing political and economic roles of those countries in world affairs.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that peace, stability and poverty are all interrelated and affect all peoples and nations of the planet. From that point of view, it is essential that we continue to work together to build a caring community of nations, where the development gap between the developed and the developing countries is reduced, the threat of terrorism is totally eliminated, the menace of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is curbed, poverty is alleviated and global warming is kept in check. That will be possible only by building better cooperation and closer partnership, fostering mutual respect, cultivating greater tolerance and enhancing the spirit of a real United Nations for all. I strongly believe that we can do that through collective will and strong determination, as well as better ethics and moral responsibility, which will help

us make a better world for all peoples in the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Augusto Casali, Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs of San Marino.

Mr. Casali (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by delegation*): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I wish first to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan on his election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that his experience, professional skills and dynamism will contribute to the success of our work. I also wish to thank Dr. Han Seung-soo for having presided over the General Assembly in one of the most difficult and delicate moments of our recent history.

Inevitably, this session of the General Assembly is still suffering the consequences of a deep, indelible wound that, a little more than a year ago, was inflicted on the whole of humanity, on the people who contributed to creating this civilization and, in particular, on a great and friendly nation, whose role has always been crucial to the future of our planet.

Feelings of pain and fright, but also rebellion, are still vivid in the minds of each and every one of us. The firm and absolute condemnation of what happened last year in September remains unchanged and has been further strengthened by the determination to spare no effort in combating and if possible defeating the dreadful threat of terrorism, which is still present.

However, San Marino is convinced that fighting terrorism exclusively through military, political and economic actions is not enough. We must ask ourselves why terrorism comes about and develops, why fundamentalism and fanaticism exist, why some individuals who proclaim to fight for the liberation of the oppressed become instruments of death. We may have found an answer, and that is why we keep on repeating in all forums, that as long as the world is stricken by hunger, poverty, underdevelopment, inequality, oppression, ignorance and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, there will be no solution to all the political, economic and social situations that are inexorably degenerating, which we continue to witness with a growing feeling of anguish, uncertainty and instability for a whole generation, for the whole of mankind.

With that in mind, San Marino has fully supported the initiatives and the procedures established by the Security Council to stem the expansion of terrorism. The Republic I represent has met in a timely manner the requirements set forth by the Counter-Terrorism Committee established by the Security Council itself. In the same way, a number of legislative and financial measures on anti-terrorism adopted by San Marino Parliament and Government are evidence of our will to proceed with the ratification of the relevant international Conventions and of the intention to pass a special law to counter terrorism and its financing.

We also believe that dialogue and tolerance among all peoples of the world are further instruments to combat terrorism and fundamentalism. That calls not only for effective political action, but also for a new culture to develop within peoples, where diversity becomes a universal heritage, and leads to unity rather than division, helps eliminate, rather than worsen, disparities, brings different cultures, religions and traditions closer together, rather than turning them into instruments of incomprehension and confrontation.

It is a disgrace that a solution to the ongoing conflict and violence in the Middle East seems out of reach. Terrorist attacks and military reprisals further exacerbate hatred and revenge, undermining any possibility of promoting negotiations and dialogue on the basis of mutual respect and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. San Marino is deeply concerned about the worsening situation in this area and strongly condemns the spiral of violence plaguing that region and indiscriminately causing victims every day, mainly among civilians, especially women and children.

Israel has the legitimate right to exist within its own borders and to defend and protect its own population. Palestinians have the same legitimate right, to live on their own land and the right to self-determination within their own State. Therefore, we deem it imperative that both parties respect the rules of international law and fully comply with all United Nations resolutions. Most recently, tensions have escalated further because of the possibility of a war against Iraq in order to remove its President, Saddam Hussein.

The Republic of San Marino can certainly neither tolerate nor accept that the world be held hostage by

unscrupulous dictators who are absolutely unreliable and who are probably willing and able to jeopardize international security. Yet, any action, including military intervention as a last resort, would in any case require the consensus and authorization of the United Nations.

The international scene is marked on many fronts by dread and insecurity. Nonetheless, San Marino follows with interest and supports the intensive activity that the United Nations is conducting to tackle a number of issues with the ultimate goal of attaining a more civilized, equitable, humane society fit for humankind.

We followed with great attention the major conferences that the United Nations promoted and organized in 2002, especially those on children, the ageing and sustainable development.

The twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on Children agreed that in order to implement the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is imperative to attain three major objectives: to guarantee children a decent standard of living in a safe environment in which they can grow up and develop physically, mentally and emotionally in a healthy manner; to ensure that they can complete at least primary school; and to provide adolescents with the opportunity to strengthen their individual capacities in a safe environment, so that they will be able to fully participate in and contribute to the society in which they live. San Marino shares those priorities and has adopted a number of legislative, social and cultural initiatives to implement those fundamental principles.

My country also welcomes the activities carried out by the international community which, on the occasion of the Second World Assembly on Ageing held last April in Madrid, adopted a political declaration and a new plan of action to safeguard the interests and needs of the elderly, a population group which has so far probably been neglected although it will considerably increase in number over the next few years.

San Marino attaches great importance to the significant changes brought about by the Assembly in the methods used to face and solve the problems of the ageing population, while seeking to eradicate stereotypes and prejudices. We have a feeling that in so doing, the international community has laid down the foundations for a future plan of action that will ensure for all human beings wellness, health and security in the last years of their lives.

Also within the framework of the United Nations, although it had different objectives, the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa was also of great importance. San Marino is aware that the economic growth of the most developed nations must go hand in hand with economic growth at the global level. Globalization, however, cannot be imposed. On the contrary, it must be conceived as an opportunity for all States and populations. It must facilitate access to markets for developing countries and promote targeted investments that take social and environmental considerations into account. At the same time, we have to build confidence and foster economic well-being to achieve the integration which we all deem to be essential. Such integration is also a precondition for the protection of both the environment and cultural diversity.

I would like to recall that the Statute of the International Criminal Court entered into force on 1 July, 2002. With that formal achievement, the community of States made a great leap forward in the progress of international law, the Court being not only a judicial institution created to prosecute genocide and crimes against humanity, but also clear evidence of the will existing at an international level to avoid granting impunity — as is too often the case — to perpetrators of atrocious and intolerable crimes against peoples or individuals.

As well, because of the role of guarantor assigned to that institution, the Republic of San Marino participated in the celebration of the fourth anniversary of the Court on 17 July, 2002 and was the first State in Europe to ratify its Statute. Furthermore, my Government believes that the International Criminal Court does not in any way endanger the international peacekeeping forces. On the contrary, the Court further guarantees their protection through the articles of its Statute. For that reason, my country hopes that the International Criminal Court will be joined and supported by as many countries as possible, and that practical solutions will be found that do not alter the Statute of Rome but that guarantee the continuity of peace operations.

On this occasion, on behalf of the Government of San Marino I feel it is my duty to reaffirm the importance and the key role played by the General Assembly as the main decision-making and representative body. Unquestionably, the functions of the General Assembly and the effectiveness of its decisions need strengthening. Moreover, the General Assembly should intensify its co-operation with the other United Nations bodies, primarily with the Security Council. A working group to which San Marino has also contributed ideas and proposals has been studying Security Council reform for eight years. All Members probably know that San Marino has long taken a stance in favour of an increase in the number of non-permanent members on the Security Council, while it agrees neither with an increase in permanent seats nor with the extension of the right of veto. We consider that this would have a positive effect on many activities of the United Nations and therefore that it would be beneficial to relations among and between States; it is something which is now sorely needed.

I wish to conclude by reasserting that the only way to overcome the consequences of the painful events that we have recently experienced is to pool our efforts and to work together, honestly and actively, in order to start a virtuous cycle in which the objectives of civil and tolerant coexistence among peoples and nations are universally shared, supported and pursued; in which the values of solidarity, respect for human life and dignity dismantle the barriers of selfishness and oppression; and in which democracy and freedom from all constraints and needs become effective.

These are the same objectives that a small State called the Republic of San Marino, which I have the honour to represent here today in the most authoritative and prestigious international Organization, has sought to achieve over 17 centuries of history in a consistent, persistent but also humble manner.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. François Lonsény Fall, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea.

Mr. Fall (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, to express my warm congratulations and wishes to His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan for every success on his election to the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I should also like to express my delegation's gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo for the competent and able manner in which he conducted the work of the fifty-sixth session. I wish to convey to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, the sincere appreciation of His Excellency General Lansana Conté, President of the Republic of Guinea, for his tireless and dedicated efforts on behalf of the community of nations.

In addition, I wish to welcome the admission of the Swiss Confederation, a country of great traditions of peace and democracy, to the Organization. My delegation looks forward with great interest to the forthcoming entry of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the family of nations. I remain convinced that the accession of those two countries will make a high-quality contribution to the endeavours of the international community and will strengthen the Organization's universality.

Twelve months have passed since the tragic events of 11 September 2001. The global security climate has suffered profound changes, casting new light on the dangers of international terrorism and its interdependence with other forms of crime. Terrorism, one need hardly stress again, constitutes a menace to international peace and security. Faced with the global dimensions of that scourge, my country associates itself fully with the efforts of the international community with a view to providing an appropriate response.

In that regard, we hope for the prompt adoption of a general convention against terrorism and for the effective implementation of other existing international legal instruments. Within the framework of the dialogue among civilizations, an appeal should be addressed to all countries for the organization of an extensive campaign of education and consciousness-raising in order to promote tolerance, respect and acceptance of others.

The current session is being held in a difficult international context dominated by numerous conflicts that compromise legitimate aspirations to peace and progress. In this climate of violence, nevertheless, a gleam of hope can be glimpsed on the African continent. We welcome the important progress made towards the restoration of peace in Angola and in the Great Lakes region, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi. In the Horn of Africa, peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia is gradually returning, but the Somalia crisis remains more

worrisome than ever. In Western Sahara, my country supports the remarkable work accomplished by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Baker. We encourage him to persist in his efforts with a view to finding an acceptable and definitive solution to that crisis.

In the Middle East, the conflict situation persists. The cycle of acute violence over the past two years has widened further the gap between the parties, reinforcing the wall of misunderstanding. The Government of Guinea is convinced that the application of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) will allow Palestinians and Israelis to coexist peacefully within secure and internationally recognized borders. We appeal to the two parties to comply unconditionally with Council resolutions 1397 (2002) and 1402 (2002). We reaffirm the support and the solidarity of Guinea to the brotherly people of Palestine, to the Palestinian Authority and to its head, President Yasser Arafat, who has fought courageously for the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State for more than 50 years.

The situation in Iraq is a source of vital concern to the people and the Government of Guinea. In order to prevent further suffering by the Iraqi population and to preserve peace in the region as well as international security and stability, my country invites the parties to show greater restraint. Iraq's acceptance of the unconditional return of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission is an encouraging sign for the peaceful settlement of the crisis. My delegation appeals earnestly to Iraq to respect and comply with the relevant Council resolutions.

Turning to the Korean Peninsula, Guinea supports the efforts for peaceful reunification of the two Koreas, in conformity with the declaration signed by the heads of State of the two countries in June 2001.

My Government reaffirms its attachment to the principle of one China.

I now turn to the situation in our subregion, West Africa, an area that has long been shaken by internal crises but that is now moving towards a climate of peace and stability. Sierra Leone has committed itself to the path of peace and reconciliation, thanks to the mediation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and to the support of the United Nations. That success was also made possible by the United Kingdom's important role. In Liberia, the situation is still precarious. My delegation remains convinced that the adoption and effective implementation of a programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups, based on the successful conclusion of the inter-Liberian dialogue begun in Abuja, will contribute to the restoration of peace and stability in the subregion. Guinea, a member of the Mano River Union, renews its commitment to continuing to work for peace.

Because of that commitment, my country took an active part, in the Rabat Summit, on 27 February 2002 and in the process of implementing its recommendations. The political dialogue at the Summit should be pursued with a view to strengthening confidence between the parties. In that regard, it is important to point out that the Joint Security Committee of the Mano River Union, which met in Freetown on 10 September 2002, decided to simultaneously reopen the borders among the three countries of the Union and to organize a caravan for peace next October that will tour those countries. My delegation takes this opportunity to again express its profound gratitude to His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco for his mediation. The political dialogue at the Summit and the respect for measures imposed by Security Council resolution 1343 (2001) represent two complementary tracks of managing the situation in the Mano River Basin. The international community, in particular the Council, should ensure follow-up, while bearing in mind the interdependence of the situations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Government of Guinea hopes that the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa will contribute to meeting the challenges faced by the States of the subregion. We also welcome the creation of a Security Council Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. Clearly, that initiative is likely to contribute to our common reflection on such problems.

Disarmament issues, particularly those related to light weapons and to anti-personnel mines, remain a source of concern. As members are aware, Guinea belongs to a subregion whose population continues to suffer the adverse effects of the proliferation and the illicit circulation of light weapons, which feed conflicts, lead to the resurgence of crime and encourage the phenomenon of child soldiers.

We welcome the renewal of the ECOWAS Moratorium aimed at eradicating that phenomenon. We call for the implementation of all measures for the dismantling of supply networks of small arms and light weapons. We support the pursuit of all the activities under way to alleviate the suffering and loss of life caused by anti-personnel mines.

The consequences of armed conflicts and natural disasters primarily affect vulnerable civilian populations, which constitute the majority of refugees and displaced persons. For more than a decade, Guinea has been hard hit by the negative socio-economic, security and environmental impact of wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate our appeal for the holding of a special consultation of the United Nations on Guinea. In this context, my country appreciates the renewed commitment made by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the workshop held on 18 July 2002 by the Security Council on the countries of the Mano River Union.

My delegation welcomes the creation of the Regional Bureau for humanitarian affairs in West Africa, the extension of the rapid response system for natural disasters and the setting up of the integrated regional information network.

Prevention and resolution of conflicts calls for the reduction of poverty and eradication of disease. The question of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis remains a source of concern, especially for developing countries, particularly those in Africa. The adoption by the General Assembly of the Millennium Declaration, the declaration of commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2001-2010 Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa, are significant steps forward.

But the question of mobilizing resources remains central to this effort. The primary responsibility for measures to be taken to implement these initiatives falls to African leaders. However, they need to be supported at the community, national, regional and international levels.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative that led to the creation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other transmittable diseases. One of the commitments made by heads of State and Government at the historic Millennium Summit was to reduce, if not eliminate, poverty. But much of the planet's population is still living in absolute poverty. This situation is aggravated by the effects of globalization that, in the absence of just and equitable rules, increases the capacity of the strong to promote their interests, while limiting that of the weak.

The advent of the African Union illustrates the will of African peoples to achieve the objectives of economic integration and consolidate the foundations of peace, stability and security in Africa. In that framework the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) remains an effective instrument for enhancing the African economies and bringing about their integration into the world economy. My delegation appeals to the various partners to provide effective support in order to make that common vision a reality.

We hope that the decisions of the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, the commitments of the G-8 in Kananaskis and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held at Johannesburg will have a positive impact on Africa.

My delegation welcomes the improvement of the procedures and methods of work aimed at better operation of the General Assembly. We support the reform of the Security Council, to adapt it to the requirements of democracy and transparency, especially by increasing the number of its permanent and non-permanent members on the basis of a more equitable geographical distribution.

Two years after the historic Millennium Declaration, the gap between North and South continues to widen. I wish to express our sincere hope for the advent of a world of greater justice and solidarity in the framework of true partnership for peace and development. Accordingly, we remain convinced that the United Nations, reformed, revitalized, adapted to new changes, remains a viable framework to face the challenges before us, and thus to ensure for future generations the conditions necessary for their fulfilment.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Dy Nien, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam.

Mr. Nguyen Dy Nien (Viet Nam): Mr. President, I wish, at the outset, to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. I would like also to express my high appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea for having efficiently presided over the deliberations of the fifty-sixth session. Viet Nam joins others in welcoming the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Confederation of Switzerland to our family of nations.

We come to this session with the remembrance of the tragic incident of 11 September, when thousands of innocent lives were lost in the towering inferno caused by terrorists. Our world has changed a lot since that day, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his statement before this body last week, to the effect that the terrorist attacks of 11 September were not an isolated event, that they were an extreme example of a global scourge, one which required a broad, sustained and global response.

By adopting Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and General Assembly resolution 56/1, by enacting and carrying out various measures in different fields, at national as well as regional levels, the community of world countries has sent out a very clear and resolute message: we condemn in the most categorical terms terrorism under whatever forms against innocent people, and we will take action under the Charter of the United Nations, because that must be the way for our fight to be sustained.

Fighting terrorism does not simply mean bringing to justice the perpetrators and conspirators, but also tackling the poverty, injustice, subjugation and illegal occupation that underlie it. That is to say, while fighting against terrorism remains high on our agenda, other issues, notably the resolution of regional conflicts and the implementation of important development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration, such as alleviating poverty, narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and development gaps within and among nations, fighting against HIV/AIDS, drugs, organized transnational crime, protecting the environment — all these should not be downgraded or become any less urgent.

Over the past year, besides efforts against terrorism, the United Nations took the lead in organizing a series of important international conferences, most notably the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development, the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children, the World Summit on Food Security and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, where concrete measures were adopted in the interests of each and every nation. The United Nations also continued its important work on conflict prevention, peace-building in various parts of the world, including its preparations for East Timor's independence, and conflict resolution in Africa and elsewhere. Mention should be made of its efforts relating to the Peace Agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The United Nations and the Secretary-General should be commended for these significant endeavours.

Even with those achievements, however, the United Nations is expected to do more. The Organization must enhance its efforts to help resolve protracted conflicts, especially those in the Middle East, by peaceful means and free from intervention and imposition. In this vein, we reiterate our full support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination and to live in an independent and sovereign State.

We welcome the dialogue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea and the resumption of talks between the former and the United States, and we sincerely hope that they will lead to fruitful conclusions. We again join other speakers in voicing our concern over the issue of Iraq, and in welcoming all efforts to defuse the tension. The acceptance by Iraq of the return of United Nations weapons inspectors without conditions gives us some hope that a military attack will be avoided.

In a world of interdependence, we consider it even more important to uphold the principle of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States. In this regard, an early end must be put to the blockades and embargoes that for decades have been causing immeasurable suffering to the peoples of Cuba, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere.

As arms races re-escalate in many parts of the world, the Conference on Disarmament, for four consecutive years, has not been able to start its substantive work; we must find a way to break the deadlock.

Effective measures to limit and mitigate the negative impact of globalization on developing countries need to be formulated and implemented to ensure equal development opportunities for all nations. International commitments to raising and maintaining official development assistance at the level of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product, to building an open, equitable multilateral trading system, to removing protectionism with a view to facilitating access of goods from developing countries into developed markets, to debt relief, and to implementing numerous principles to protect the global environment including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and so on, must be strengthened and put into action. To accomplish these goals, the United Nations and its affiliated agencies and organizations, especially the financial institutions need to strengthen themselves through the ongoing reform process.

Viet Nam continues to hold the view that this process should primarily focus on enhancing the role of the General Assembly and on making the Security Council more democratic, representative, transparent and accountable through the expansion of its membership in both the non-permanent and the permanent categories. In that connection, we wish to reaffirm our support for those candidates, such as India, Japan and Germany, that have the capability to make major contributions to the work of that important body.

In South-East Asia, the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are determined to strengthen their unity and cooperation in order to respond to the challenges arising within and outside the region. The implementation of the Hanoi Plan of Action, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration and the Hanoi Declaration on narrowing the development gap for closer ASEAN integration has achieved initial encouraging results.

ASEAN has continued to further deepen its relationship with its dialogue partners as well as other international institutions and organizations, with a view to contributing further to peace, stability and development. Apart from their strong commitment and enormous efforts devoted to the fight against terrorism, including the recent signing of the ASEAN-US Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism, the ASEAN countries are working closely with China for the early adoption of a declaration on the conduct of parties in the South China Sea. This is another positive development towards building a code of conduct in the South China Sea, as agreed by ASEAN leaders at the Sixth ASEAN Summit, held in Hanoi in December 1998, thereby contributing to the promotion of confidence-building and the resolution of all disputes by peaceful means.

Consistent with its foreign policy of independence, sovereignty, openness, multilateralization and the diversification of its external relations as well as its desire to be a friend and reliable partner of all countries striving for independence, peace and cooperation, Viet Nam has continued to develop and strengthen its friendships and multifaceted cooperation with countries in and outside the region, and with international organizations. Viet Nam is expediting all necessary procedures to join the World Trade Organization soon.

The free and democratic general elections held in May 2002 and the successful conclusion of the first session of the new National Assembly, with highly qualified representatives elected to important State, National Assembly and Government positions for the 2002-2007 term, constitute important events in the political life of our nation and create a firm foundation for us to continue the renewal process aimed at building Viet Nam into a strong country with a prosperous people and a just, democratic and civilized society. In striving for those goals, we hope to continue to enjoy the support and cooperation of all countries and organizations. For its part, Vietnam pledges to do its utmost to contribute to the work of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Leonardo Santos Simão, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique.

Mr. Simão (Mozambique). I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating Mr. Jan Kavan on his election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. We are confident that, with his experience, wisdom and proven skills, our deliberations will produce the desired successful outcome.

Let me also pay a well-deserved tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, for the excellent manner in which he discharged his duties as

President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

I would also wish to commend the Secretary-General for his continued devotion to peace and development worldwide. During his recent visit to Mozambique, we had the opportunity to discuss the best ways of furthering the goals of the United Nations and strengthening cooperation between Mozambique and the United Nations. We remain committed to continuing to work closely with the Secretary-General.

The Government of Mozambique welcomes the Swiss Confederation as a Member of the United Nations and looks forward to welcoming the Democratic Republic of East Timor. They will further strengthen our universal Organization.

Allow me to express our sympathy to the peoples and the Governments of several countries in the world that have recently been hit by severe floods. We in Mozambique and in Southern Africa understand the economic and social consequences of floods. Floods, drought and other natural calamities have become a frequent occurrence in the world, and in Africa in particular. It is therefore our hope and expectation that we will be able to prepare ourselves to better deal with issues arising from natural disasters. Perhaps it is high time we revisit the outcome of the 1994 World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, held in Yokohama.

The 11 September 2001 attacks demonstrated to all of us the dangers of international terrorism, which represents a serious threat to the peace and security of every nation, rich or poor. In that regard, it is our collective duty to fight this threat effectively, under the leadership of the United Nations. To be successful in this endeavour we need to clearly understand and address the root causes of terrorism, amongst which we want to stress poverty and other injustices.

In addition to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), we must give due recognition to regional agreements and declarations to combat and eliminate terrorism, such as the 1999 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Declaration against Terrorism adopted by our heads of State or Government in January this year, as valuable tools for strengthening cooperation and providing a platform for effective action to suppress terrorism.

Mozambique has already submitted its report on legislation and measures for preventing and combating terrorism, and is in the final stages of the process of ratifying all 12 conventions on terrorism. However, for the effective implementation of these legal instruments Mozambique needs support from the international community to strengthen its institutions, namely the police, the judiciary, the financial system and the Attorney-General's office.

We have witnessed this year the holding of a number of major United Nations conferences and summits devoted to a wide range of socio-economic issues: the International Conference on Financing for Development, the World Food Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the special session of the General Assembly on Children. We have also seen the holding in Barcelona of an international conference on HIV/AIDS, at which our leaders recognized that this pandemic is a global problem challenging our common will and requiring global responsibility and response.

The common feature of all these events has been strong and unanimous agreement on the need to ensure the implementation of the agreed outcomes and commitments in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Our leaders have stressed that for this to happen, there is a need for unity of purpose, collective responsibility and political will.

We should, continuously and critically, assess the progress made in each area of commitment, with a view to realizing the aspirations and needs of our peoples. The future of the world is in our hands. We must not fail to meet the expectations of our peoples. The time has now come for action. We must act decisively to honour the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration.

My Government has been following with keen interest the latest developments in the Middle East. We urge both parties to return to the negotiating table to find a lasting peace in that region; such a peace must include an independent Palestinian State living side by side with Israel, and the solution of outstanding issues deemed important by both parties. Without a comprehensive and just solution to the question of Palestine, and without full respect for the legitimate interests of all the peoples of the region, the prospects of peace will remain elusive and distant. The international community should encourage both Israelis

and Palestinians to work hard for peace, drawing on all the strength and resolve they need to overcome obstacles along the way. Taking into account our own experience in Mozambique, we believe that peace is a real possibility in the Middle East, and that the parties must seize the opportunity now.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Iraq on its wise decision to allow the return of the United Nations inspectors. It is our hope that the resumption of the inspections will mark a new era of cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations within the spirit and the letter of the United Nations Charter and international law.

This session is taking place at a moment when we are witnessing important progress regarding the resolution of conflicts in Africa. In Angola we have noted with satisfaction the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and UNITA, which marked the end of a protracted war. We salute this Memorandum of Understanding and believe that it opens a new era for the Angolan people: an era of hope and great expectations. We appeal to the international community to continue supporting the people and the Government of Angola in the consolidation of peace and stability, national reconstruction and the strengthening of democracy, as well as in responding to the current humanitarian needs.

Sierra Leone is living in peace after the successful implementation of the peace process, and following general and presidential elections. We hope that these positive developments will lead to the improvement of the political environment in the Mano river region as a whole.

The recent agreements between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, as well as the understanding between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, have created the hope that the peace process will be irreversible. The attainment of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will undoubtedly contribute to bringing about the needed stability in the Great Lakes region, and will pave the way for the rapid economic integration of Southern Africa. We believe that with good will there can be a solution to the concerns of all parties involved in this conflict.

In the Comoros and in Lesotho, peace is now a reality. We salute the efforts made by the peoples of those countries to make Africa a continent of hope. We are happy to see Ethiopia and Eritrea working together, with the support of the United Nations, to strengthen peace and good-neighbourliness. The acceptance by both parties of the decision of the Boundary Commission was a major step forward.

My Government is concerned at the lack of progress in Western Sahara. We wish to encourage the United Nations and the parties concerned to pursue further efforts, within the established framework, with a view to finding a lasting and internationally acceptable solution to this issue.

The African leaders established the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as an instrument to address these problems. NEPAD is based on the principle of African ownership aiming at setting an agenda to renew the continent and to encompass national and regional priorities along with development plans. This is to be done through a participatory process and a new framework for interaction and partnership with the rest of the world.

The support already expressed by many partners of Africa is a signal that NEPAD is a viable initiative. In that context, I would like to salute the encouraging results of the Group of Eight Summit recently held in Kananaskis, Canada, where the world's most industrialized countries expressed their support for NEPAD. In the same vein, I salute the results of the General Assembly's high-level meeting on NEPAD, held in this Hall two days ago. These results enhance our hope of a better future for Africa. Let us work together to make it a reality.

In Mozambique, as part of efforts to fight poverty and to implement the Millennium Declaration, the Government approved, and is implementing, a Plan of Action for the Eradication of Absolute Poverty, locally known as PARPA. The overall objective of PARPA is the substantial reduction of absolute poverty in the country through investment in education, health, agriculture and rural development, as well as through good governance and macroeconomic stability.

PARPA is partially financed by savings achieved through debt reduction from our creditors — bilateral and multilateral — under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. We are thankful to all our partners for the debt reduction and the cancellations we

are receiving. Let us continue to work together to find a definitive solution.

This session is being held at a particularly important moment in the history of Mozambique, given that on 4 October 2002 we will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Rome Peace Agreement, which marked the end of a devastating war of destabilization. Ten years after this historic achievement, the Mozambicans have kept the peace and shown that they can live together in harmony. Given the historic significance of this date, we have declared it a national holiday: the Day of Peace and Reconciliation.

Mozambicans are today enjoying the dividends of peace, which were achieved with the invaluable contribution of the United Nations in what became a peacekeeping operation success story.

To consolidate this hard-won peace, we are implementing home-grown development plans with a view to promoting the welfare of our people. We are also strengthening democracy, governance and the rule of law, and preparations are under way for the forthcoming municipal elections in 2003 and the general and presidential elections in 2004.

In my address during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, I spoke of the negative consequences of the floods which affected Mozambique during two consecutive years, 2000 and 2001. Today, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that most of the flood's victims have been resettled and are engaged in productive activities. Mozambique's economy is gradually recovering from the scourge of the floods, and, as a result of the hard work of the Mozambican people and of adequate international assistance, my country achieved a growth rate of 13.9 per cent in its gross domestic product last year and of 12.1 per cent in the first six months of this year.

The report of the Secretary-General on assistance to Mozambique (A/57/97), which I commend, provides a further account of the achievements recorded by the Mozambican people in the process of national reconstruction and of economic and social rehabilitation following the floods of 2000 and 2001. The 2001 *Human Development Report* gives additional evidence of the progress that has been achieved.

I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate the sincere gratitude of the people and the Government of Mozambique to the international community for its invaluable support to the victims of the flooding. Mozambique will continue to count on the international community's support, in particular with a view to mitigating the effects of the drought that is affecting Mozambique and other countries of southern and eastern Africa, and in order better to prepare the country to face natural calamities.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm my country's faith in the United Nations and in its Charter, for they remain the indispensable foundation of a just, peaceful and more prosperous world. We believe that the current reform of the United Nations will help it to provide better service to Member States, particularly those most in need. We are convinced that the reform will give rise to a stronger United Nations, with a clear focus on developing countries and on results-oriented actions.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kolawolé Idji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Benin.

Mr. Idji (Benin) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Benin, allow me to convey to Mr. Jan Kavan our heartfelt congratulations on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. His skills, his extensive experience in international affairs and his dedication to the lofty causes championed by the United Nations guarantee the success of our work.

I wish to assure him of my delegation's full cooperation and support in ensuring the full success of the work of this session.

I should like to take this opportunity also to congratulate and to thank his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea, who presided so ably and with such dedication over the work of the fifty-sixth session of the Assembly.

I wish also to pay tribute to our Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, whose devotion and skills have enhanced the prestige of our Organization.

The message that I bring the Assembly from Benin is a message of peace, which our people are experiencing, and a message of the preservation of peace in all its aspects, in keeping with the Charter of our Organization and with the Millennium Declaration, in which we pledged to build for future generations a world free from fear, hunger and ignorance.

The barbaric acts perpetrated a year ago, on 11 September 2001 here in New York and in other places, are still vivid in our memory, making ever more urgent the need to make greater strides in our common endeavour of civilization. The sincere and spontaneous compassion and sympathy of the peoples of the world for the victims of the terrible attacks of 11 September prove that more than ever before we are bound by a common destiny.

It is therefore vital to give real meaning to this solidarity and this shared responsibility. The United Nations must continue to play a dynamic role in the promotion of international cooperation in order to prevent and punish acts of terrorism.

For Benin, nothing — no pretext whatsoever — could justify such barbaric acts, and the terrifying images that I am loath to recall today will remain etched in our collective memory throughout the twenty-first century. Benin's firm commitment to combating terrorism is unambiguous, and we intend to fight this scourge with resolve.

Thus, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), adopted on 28 September 2001, Benin submitted a report on the measures we have taken to prevent and punish acts of terrorism. A constructive and effective dialogue is under way with the Security Council Committee regarding proposed measures to prevent and suppress the financing of acts of terrorism. However, the anti-terrorist campaign will be more effective and more comprehensive if it is organized on the basis of strict respect for the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We believe that there is an urgent need for a clear, precise, legal definition of international terrorism in order to prevent the haphazard character of our individual or collective initiatives from jeopardizing the effectiveness of the global coalition against the terrorist threat.

By placing Africa at the centre of its concerns for the new millennium, the United Nations has rightly focused the attention of the international community on that continent, which, despite its commendable efforts, is having difficulty finding its way towards development. The persistence of war and conflict, which repeatedly lead to great bloodshed in that part of the world, is one of the main reasons for that situation.

Aware that, as it faces new challenges, our continent is at a critical stage in its development and that it is for Africa to shoulder its own responsibilities, African leaders have taken a number of political initiatives aimed at resolving conflict, rising to the great challenge of endowing Africa with new forums for dialogue and action. This African renaissance, by means of which Africa is determined to take control of its own destiny and find solutions to its ills, should be encouraged through support for the African Union, which was launched in Durban, South Africa, in July this year. The African Union espouses the vision of the founding fathers of the African nations and of the former Organization of African Unity. The African Union is different from the Organization of African Unity because it stresses the need for the economic integration of the continent and affirms that peace, security and stability are indispensable conditions for the creation of an environment conducive to development and that good governance must be the norm for our States.

I wish to reaffirm what many earlier speakers have said: Africa is beginning to play its proper role. It looks forward to a concrete demonstration of the goodwill so often expressed by the international community. It looks forward to real action in the form of deeds. We expect this for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), for example.

Under the wise guidance of the President of the General Assembly, we spent an entire day debating that African Union programme. Relevant remarks were uttered, commitments undertaken and forceful statements made from this very rostrum, and I do not need to dwell further on that subject. Now is the time for action, and time is of the essence.

Globalization must become synonymous with a better life for all the peoples of the world. The world cannot just stand by and watch the spectacle of an Africa that has been marginalized and ravaged by wars and disease. Africa must not be an object of condescension, as if the world did not have sufficient resources to avert catastrophe. I am sure that our collective awareness is real and sincere.

That is why I welcome the timely initiative of the Security Council to establish an Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. We hope that that initiative will demonstrate a genuine, ongoing commitment on the part of the Security Council to act to put an end to the cycle of violence in Africa, thereby according equal treatment to all humanitarian crises without exception.

In the context of collective efforts to consider and deal with the question of conflict prevention and resolution through a comprehensive, integrated approach that takes into account political, economic and social dimensions, my delegation recommends reinforced interaction between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, in particular by developing close consultations with the Ad Hoc Advisory Group of the Economic and Social Council on African countries emerging from conflict.

One of the most encouraging signs for Africa in recent years — indeed in recent months — is the firm determination finally to put an end to fratricidal warfare. We must support such efforts everywhere, including in Sierra Leone, Angola, Congo, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

I want to comment in particular on Sierra Leone, which has successfully emerged from a risky and dangerous electoral process. I would like to take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to the United Nations and to the countries which, at the bilateral level, have been helping Sierra Leone to reintegrate itself into the community of nations. I hope that the positive evolution of the situation in that country will have a ripple effect within the Mano River Union.

I welcome the outstanding progress that has been made in the process towards the restoration of peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that respect, I would like to pay a well-deserved tribute to President Thabo Mbeki and to the facilitator, Sir Ketumile Masire, for their commitment and perseverance.

We welcome the fact that the guns have now been silenced in Angola after so many years of suffering, destruction and privation. It is crucial to strengthen and consolidate the peace process that is under way in that country. That is why I urgently appeal to the international community to provide support that is commensurate with the enormous reconstruction needs of Angola. Only thus will conditions be right for the establishment of lasting peace and sustainable development.

I am pleased to note, among the initiatives to promote peace in Africa, the success of negotiations on an agreement on the demarcation of the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the continuing dialogue to restore peace in Burundi and the Sudan.

In January this year, 49 of the poorest countries of the world chose my country, Benin, to hold the chairmanship of the coordinating office for the least developed countries. When we accepted that prestigious post, my Government was well aware of the heavy responsibilities that we were assuming.

The most important item on mankind's agenda today is sustainable development. Any progress — or any regression — must be assessed by the group of countries that Benin is now coordinating. The international community itself recognizes that many problems remain. The Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries noted with regret that previous goals had not been achieved, and it clearly identified the main obstacles to the development of the least developed countries. These include the continuing decrease in official development assistance, the debt burden, the difficulty of gaining access to the markets of the developed countries and the lack of foreign investment. By adopting a Programme of Action and a Political Declaration at Brussels, the international community renewed its commitment to helping the least developed countries resolutely to deal with mechanisms whose operations increase poverty.

Mindful of the need to mobilize energy and increase capacity in order thoroughly to implement the Brussels Programme of Action, the least developed countries took the initiative of meeting at Cotonou, from 5 to 7 August 2002, in order to consider ways and means of ensuring the implementation of the Programme.

The Cotonou conference formulated guidelines and made recommendations, contained in the important Cotonou Declaration. At the national level, the Declaration recommends the establishment of an implementation and follow-up mechanism to monitor integration of the Programme of Action into national development programmes and to promote the creation of a national forum for dialogue. It also recommends that the least developed countries design their strategic development priorities in keeping with local contexts. That is an important factor for guaranteeing rationality and national ownership of policies. At the international level, United Nations and other international agencies are called on to incorporate the Programme of Action into their work programmes and Government processes.

I believe it important to call attention to the dangerous dwindling of resources available to the operational institutions of the United Nations system — particularly the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization — and to stress the crucial need to find ways and means of increasing those resources in order to strengthen these agencies' valuable efforts to combat poverty in our countries.

The Cotonou ministerial meeting also recommended the establishment of a synoptic table to be used by the Economic and Social Council when it reviews and follows up the implementation of the Programme of Action by the least developed countries and their development partners.

I wish at this point to reiterate our gratification and thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the celerity with which he implemented the decision taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session to establish the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The Secretary-General nominated Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh to that important post, which he has already assumed. In nominating Ambassador Chowdhury, the Secretary-General could not have made a more fortunate choice. We all know Ambassador Chowdhury and his great experience, resolve and dedication. His country, Bangladesh, has served the group of least developed countries with distinction for 20 years. I salute that work today. The Secretary-General and each one of us must now offer every assistance to Ambassador Chowdhury and his Office in becoming fully operational and in carrying out his important mission of obtaining the resources necessary for action.

To that end, it is important that every Member of the United Nations, even the poorest, make some effort, for example, by contributing to the Trust Fund to support the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action. The Government of Benin will assume all its responsibilities in that respect in due course.

In Johannesburg recently, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the international community acknowledged its responsibility to the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized as members of the great human family. It also recognized the need to conclude a world alliance for sustainable development, by which the developed countries would make the essential effort of solidarity with the poorest. A giant step forward was taken there, but action is now required. We fervently hope today that all the measures advocated in Johannesburg will become a reality. If they do not, there will be no reduction, but an increase in poverty. We can stave off that danger, which is deadly for all of us.

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon, His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Hammoud.

Mr. Hammoud (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to begin by congratulating Mr. Kavan on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. I wish him every success as he embarks on this task. I would also like to thank his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, who so ably steered the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, which was convened amidst acute and grave circumstances.

I would be remiss if I failed to express my appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless work to enhance the role of our international Organization.

It is also my pleasure to congratulate the Swiss Federation on its admission to membership of our international Organization.

Lebanon considers the United Nations to be the main body entrusted with the realization of international peace and security and with upholding respect for the rules of international law. The United Nations is a safe haven for States, particularly small ones, which find in its Charter the reassurances they need in a turbulent world. Therefore, any departure from the Charter, circumventing, disregarding, or overstepping its authority; any selective handling of its resolutions; or any attempt to impose settlements on and solutions to conflicts and disputes outside its framework flagrantly undermines the credibility of the Organization and its organs, particularly the Security Council. Such acts are a devastating blow to the pillars of international order.

Lebanon believes that there is a causal relationship between security and sustainable

development and calls for a renewed effort, under United Nations auspices, to eliminate poverty and disease, bridge the gap between the North and the South, and reduce social disparities. These are the scourges that are often manipulated by those who harbour ill intentions towards humanity. In this context, Lebanon welcomes the establishment of the African Union and supports the principles on which the New Partnership for Africa's Development was built.

The work of this session coincides with the first anniversary of the horrific terrorist attacks and the terrible tragedy that struck the United States of America. The world is still suffering from their terrible repercussions. On behalf of Lebanon, I avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate our sympathy with the bereaved families. Like us, they are heartbroken over the loss of their sons, relatives and loved ones. We also renew our commitment to cooperating with the international community to combat international terrorism in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) of 28 September 2001 and other relevant United Nations resolutions.

The events of 11 September 2001 impeded the convening of the ninth summit of the Francophonie, scheduled to be held last year under the theme of "Dialogue among civilizations". My country is proud to be hosting the conference in mid-October. There is no doubt that the choice of theme for the conference before these dramatic events arose from the foresight of its members and participants and from their conviction of the need to interact and to engage in dialogue, far removed from the logic of confrontation and hostility.

Lebanon itself was the target of terrorist acts prior to 11 September 2001 and its army stood up to the perpetrators and overcame them. Lebanon and its Arab brothers have been suffering from the State terrorism continuously practised by Israel without international deterrence since the Deir Yassin massacre and the massacres in the Qana and Jenin camps.

Israel has recently begun to manipulate the tragic events of September 2001 and the international campaign to combat terrorism, using them shamelessly as a pretext for persecuting the Palestinian people and depriving them of their right to self-determination. Israel has launched a slanderous campaign of threats against Lebanon and its legitimate resistance, as well as against Syria, while the origin of the conflict in the region is the Israeli occupation of Arab territories.

The reality is that Israel has continuously defied resolutions of international legitimacy. Israel has disregarded Security Council resolution 425 (1978) for more than 22 years and has refused to implement the Security Council resolution calling for the establishment of a fact-finding mission to investigate the Jenin camp massacre. It has resorted to terror and violence to implement expansionist and settlement policies. It has accumulated weapons of mass destruction in an arsenal primarily stacked with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. It continues to oppose all attempts to reach a just and comprehensive peaceful solution to the Middle East issue, and remains, nonetheless, in total impunity, never held accountable or punished for its actions. That situation can only strengthen the impression among Arab Governments and peoples that there is a double standard at play in international affairs, and that, regrettably, Israel is allowed to remain outside and above the law.

Shimon Peres today accused Hezbollah of terrorism because it has effectively contributed to the legitimate resistance against Israeli occupation and to forcing Israeli forces to withdraw from most occupied Lebanese territory.

Hezbollah is represented in Lebanese parliament and participates in the political, economic and social life of Lebanon.

Mr. Peres is in fact the last person who should have the right to talk about terrorism. He is the one responsible directly for the killing of 102 women, children and elderly at Qana when Israel bombed the UNIFIL tent where they had sought safety and shelter. Israel should be held accountable for such crimes.

Israel was founded on terrorism and has used it to occupy land and establish faits accomplis.

If Israel's perpetration of the massacres of Dair Yasin, Qana and Jenin is not terrorism, then what is terrorism?

Is not Israel's daily breaking of the sound barrier over Lebanese cities and villages a form of terrorism and intimidation?

Is not Israel's kidnapping of Lebanese citizens from their homes and detaining them in Israeli prisons as hostages another form of terrorism?

Is not leaving hundreds of thousands of landmines in south Lebanon to kill civilians a form of terrorism that should be strongly condemned?

Is not Israel's constant threat of invading Lebanon and destroying its civil institutions, infrastructure and development projects a terrible form of terrorism, devastating to our hopes in reconstruction and rehabilitation?

As if occupying Arab lands and terrorizing their civilian populations were not enough, Israeli greed prompts Israel to usurp our natural wealth and water resources, contravening international laws and instruments. The Israeli Prime Minister directly threatened to attack Lebanon, using the pretext that we are diverting the course of the Hasbani and Wazzani rivers. However, the fact is that Lebanon is trying to draw limited amounts of water for some poor southern villages that have suffered from the Israeli occupation for many years, which will lead us to pump a total of approximately 9 million cubic metres annually. By all standards, that amount is far below our legitimate rights, it represents only one tenth of our right.

Lebanon again rejects those Israeli threats and draws the attention of the Assembly and the Security Council to the danger those threats represent and to their direct negative impact on international peace and security. It is difficult for any human society to strive for security in the absence of political, economic and social justice. We, therefore, believe that security approaches and partial interim solutions alone cannot possibly succeed in resolving the Middle East conflict. Therefore, we call for the adoption of an approach that takes into account the priority of the political dimension of the conflict and the need to arrive at a just and comprehensive solution to the conflict in the region in all its aspects.

In that context, Arab leaders unanimously adopted an integral, indivisible peace initiative at the Arab Summit, held in Beirut on 28 and 29 March 2002, based on the following conditions.

First, Israel must withdraw completely from the occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, to the border of 4 June 1967, and from the territories it still occupies in southern Lebanon; secondly, it must reach a just solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees, to be agreed upon in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III); thirdly, it must agree to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State in the Palestinian territories occupied since 4 June 1967 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Subsequently, the Arab States will consider the Arab-Israeli conflict ended, will enter into a peace agreement with Israel, will ensure security for all the countries of the region and will establish normal relations with Israel in the context of that just peace. A central element of the Arab peace initiative is securing an agreement not to allow any type of resettlement of Palestinian refugees that is incompatible with the particularities of the host Arab countries.

It is unfortunate that Israel has responded to that initiative by increasing its aggression and reoccupying the West Bank, relentlessly targeting human lives and property in the occupied Palestinian territory. Simultaneously, others have chosen to ignore or override the initiative, despite its comprehensiveness, unanimous acceptance by Arabs and broad international support.

The Beirut Summit established a special committee to implement the Arab peace initiative. Once formed, the committee requested a meeting with the Quartet to present the initiative and confirm its status as a point of reference for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The initiative contains all previous references dating back to the Madrid Peace Conference, held in 1991, and is based on resolutions of international legitimacy. We seek to submit it to the Security Council for adoption and for the subsequent establishment of an international mechanism to implement it.

A meeting was held yesterday between the Quartet and a delegation of the committee at United Nations Headquarters. We hope that this will pave the way for a mechanism of prior consultations and joint effort based on resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab peace initiative.

The Arab peace initiative, which we uphold and which was adopted unanimously by the Arab countries, represents a historic opportunity that may not present itself again. It cannot be replaced by partial or interim approaches, the futility of which has been proven

throughout decades. Instead of leading to the long-awaited peace, they have led to renewed violence. We, therefore, call upon the international community to adopt this initiative and to support it, as it represents an opportunity for achieving our aspirations — a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Submitting disputes before the United Nations and implementing United Nations resolutions, particularly those of the Security Council, can guarantee the peaceful settlement of any given conflict. By following that course, the parties could be spared the need to settle their dispute by military means. It may not be easy to contain the tragic ramifications of military action in a given region. That is particularly true of Iraq, which also was the subject of deliberations at the Beirut Arab Summit. It was also decided there that the solution to the Iraqi problem must be achieved through dialogue between Iraq and the United Nations. Iraq should not once again be a theatre of war, which would increase the suffering of its people. The Arab leaders consider an attack against any Arab State a threat to the national security of all Arab countries.

As president of the Arab Summit, Lebanon hopes that Iraq's compliance with the will of the international community and allowing the return of the international weapons inspectors will lead to the end of the suffering of its people and to a comprehensive solution that will lead to the implementation of Security Council resolutions and to the lifting of sanctions. We also hope that that will enable the Middle East to rid itself of weapons of mass destruction and will avert the threat or use of force against Iraq, thus preserving and respecting its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Lebanon takes pride in its strong and positive relationship with the United Nations, being one of its co-founders and having contributed to the drafting of its Charter as well as to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As members may be aware, since 1978, the Organization has deployed the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the aftermath of the Israeli occupation. In May 2000, UNIFIL had the opportunity to begin fulfilling its mandate after Israel had been forced to withdraw from most of the territories in the south. That withdrawal was possible thanks to our people's solidarity, their legitimate resistance to the Israeli occupation and the fact that our Government embraced their heroic efforts for liberation, and the international support for their just cause. The Lebanese Shebaa Farms, at the foot of Mount Hermon, and other points along the withdrawal line remained under occupation.

Another important aspect of UNIFIL's mandate that has yet to be fulfilled is the restoration of international peace and security. That task remains hampered by Israel's continued occupation, threats against Lebanon and provocations, as seen daily in the repeated violation of Lebanon's sovereignty over its land, airspace and territorial waters. Israel continues to occupy the Syrian Golan and to ignore the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. It has rejected every initiative to find a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem. I should like to take advantage of this opportunity to commend the efforts of the United Nations and UNIFIL's important role as it fulfils its mandate.

The liberation of Lebanese territories from Israeli occupation will remain incomplete unless we address the heinous legacy of occupation and succeed in finding a just solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees, in particular those who live in Lebanon. Such a solution should be based on their right to return and on a rejection of their settlement in Lebanon. Failure to factor the refugees into the equation of a solution based on the right to return and on the rejection of resettlement in host countries would create a time bomb. It would undermine the security that we are all striving to attain in the Middle East on the basis of a peaceful, comprehensive and just settlement of the conflict.

We should like to stress here that a solution to the question of Palestinian refugees cannot be found through exclusive bilateral Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Guaranteed respect for the rules of international law and the permanence of any solution require that host and other concerned countries, including Lebanon, be involved in the negotiating process.

With regard to mine clearance, Lebanon is stepping up its cooperation with the United Nations to assist in clearing the mines that the Israeli occupying forces are responsible for laying in our territories. I will note that Israel failed to hand over complete maps and records indicating the specific locations of those mines.

We in Lebanon attach the highest importance to the release of Lebanese citizens who are unduly

detained in Israeli prisons. They were kidnapped by Israel and incarcerated as hostages, in flagrant defiance of the rules and instruments of international law.

It is no secret that the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon has taxed our endurance. Our citizens' lives have been tragically shattered, their properties have been destroyed, their infrastructures have been decimated and our development has been hampered. Increased international assistance is required to revitalize our economy and to increase our opportunities for growth. Lebanon reserves the right to demand compensation for the damage caused by Israeli occupation and acts of aggression, in accordance with established procedures in international political and judicial forums.

The reconstruction and rehabilitation of the liberated Lebanese territories and the revitalization of Lebanon's economy are among our Government's highest priorities. Lebanon continues to work for the recovery of its economy and for the reform of its taxation system through the adoption of carefully developed measures and legislation, including the value-added tax on goods and services and the gradual reduction of tariffs, in addition to the direct tax levy and the rationalization of spending. Lebanon's parliament recently adopted the Privatization Act, which regulates that aspect of economic activity and defines its conditions and field of application. Such legislation, including the two recently adopted acts, joins a series of laws developed to enhance investors' confidence in the free-market system, which we are keen to preserve.

Along the same lines, those in positions of responsibility in the Lebanese Administration are subject to strict accountability and liability rules, including money-laundering and the prohibition of illegitimate gain. It is worth mentioning here that, over the years, the Lebanese internal security forces have destroyed all illegitimate crops, including hashish. But Lebanon did not receive the assistance, provided to others, that would have enabled our farmers to live in dignity.

Lebanon signed a partnership agreement with the European Union last June after acceding to the Greater Arab Free Trade Zone, to which most Arab States currently belong. Preparations are under way for us to join the World Trade Organization, in which we currently enjoy observer status.

We gather here under the roof of the United Nations, our common home, to engage in dialogue on the best ways to translate into reality the great values of the Charter. Lebanon takes pride in its firm belief in those values and in the fact that, in its national unity, it embodies the plurality of its society. It stands for a rich human experience, both civilized and pioneering, of which we are proud and which the international community is surely keen to preserve.

Lebanon looks forward to cooperating with other Members to contribute to this session's success and to finding constructive solutions to the problems and challenges that we face, while upholding the principles of liberty, justice and peace around the world, particularly in the Middle East region. Finding a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict in all its aspects will surely liberate our States and peoples from the grip of a protracted problem that has depleted their resources and hampered their development.

The President: Once again, I appeal to everybody to limit their statements to the agreed 15 minutes, which also applies to this afternoon's meeting.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Stafford Neil, chairman of the delegation of Jamaica.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): On behalf of the delegation of Jamaica, I express congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. We pledge our full cooperation with you in the work of this session. We also express our deep gratitude to the outgoing President, Mr. Han Seung-soo, under whose guidance the fifty-sixth session was successfully completed.

Jamaica welcomes the Swiss Confederation as a Member of the family of the United Nations, and we look forward to welcoming East Timor when it assumes membership in the Organization later during this session.

Forty years ago on this day, 18 September, Jamaica joined the family of the United Nations as its 106th member. It was one of our first foreign policy initiatives upon achieving independence. In taking that step, Jamaica signalled its readiness to assume its obligations as a member of the international community and to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the promotion

of economic and social progress through multilateral cooperation within the United Nations system. Today, on its fortieth anniversary, Jamaica reaffirms its faith in the United Nations and proclaims its unwavering commitment to multilateralism.

Over its 40 years Jamaica has played its part through active participation in widening the reach of the United Nations into a range of activities and programmes critical to global development and world peace. Our policy is to support the strengthening of the United Nations system and to uphold its moral authority. In a world of many nations with diverse interests and of great disparities in wealth and military power, it is an indispensable instrument in the promotion of the rule of law in international affairs and in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

With the changing nature and growing complexity of international affairs, especially in the context of globalization and with the emergence of new challenges to peace and security, the fulfilment of the United Nations' role remains critical. Now, more than ever before, we need to strengthen the structures and institutions of the international system to safeguard our common interests in achieving a global order of peace and economic and social progress for all.

Over the past year, dramatic events have occurred which have brought old and new issues to the forefront of attention. We recall the shock and horror of the terrorist attacks on 11 September; the ensuing war in Afghanistan; the outbreak of renewed violence in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians; the escalation of old tensions in South Asia; and more recently, the threat of a new war in Iraq. All of these were given special attention by the Secretary-General in the presentation of his report to the General Assembly last Thursday. Jamaica commends the Secretary-General for the clarity of his vision on the role of the United Nations in the resolution of current global problems.

Of high importance on the agenda for immediate action is the situation in the Middle East, where recently we have witnessed so much death, destruction and human suffering, particularly among civilians. It should now be clear that the only true way to find peace and security is through laying the foundations for a just and durable settlement. What is needed now is a plan to move the process forward towards the convening of a peace conference. There has emerged a significant level of consensus on the main elements of a settlement — the withdrawal of Israel from occupied Palestinian territory; the exercise of self-determination for the Palestinian people and the establishment of arrangements for the two States of Israel and Palestine to coexist within clearly defined and internationally recognized boundaries. We believe it is important and urgent that advantage is taken of the present situation of relative calm to proceed towards negotiations involving the leadership of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

With regard to Iraq, which has been the subject of so much debate in recent weeks, it is up to the Security Council to carry out its responsibilities in a manner broadly acceptable to the international community and to preclude unilateral actions that could lead to unpredictable consequences and to wider instability in the region. This is an important moment for the United Nations, and we expect the Security Council to act in accordance with the Charter to safeguard the integrity of the international system and to ensure the maintenance of peace.

To make the world a safer place requires measures to be adopted on a broad front. The elimination of terrorism is a task requiring cooperation by the entire international community. The comprehensive measures set out in Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) establish the framework for action, and Jamaica is doing its part in that effort. At the same time, it should be recognized that for achievement of the long-term objectives, it is necessary to address the root causes of terrorism in their political, economic, social and psychological dimensions. It is also important that, in the campaign against terrorism, there should be no targeting or stigmatizing of particular ethnic groups or religious communities; nor should it become the basis for intolerance, persecution or discrimination against minority groups or for the violation of human rights.

Linked to the question of terrorism are security problems arising from the continued growth in the illicit trade in narcotics and the illicit transfer of guns and other weapons which have become inseparable elements in the operations of transnational crime. This is particularly the case in the Caribbean, where this phenomenon has assumed alarming proportions in the era of globalization. A growing network of illicit trade has developed in drugs and weapons, which is subverting the internal security of our Caribbean States

and threatening social stability. We acknowledge ongoing efforts at the regional and bilateral levels to address these security concerns, but more needs to be done, particularly in regulating, monitoring and reporting transfers in small arms in jurisdictions in which these weapons are produced.

These are some of the negative features that accompany globalization and add to the problems facing developing countries. The globalization of trade, finance and the means of production presents even greater challenges. The contraction of overall development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment flows, and the volatility in short-term capital flows, have resulted over time in declining growth rates and increasing poverty, thus widening the gap between rich and poor countries. The opportunities for economic growth and prosperity promised by globalization have, therefore, not materialized for the majority. Instead, developing countries have been placed in peril in a system in which survival will remain an uphill struggle against dislocation and marginalization. Without some arrangement to promote greater equity in the sharing of the benefits of globalization, we will witness a pattern of continued enrichment of only those endowed with the resources, capital stocks and technology, who can reap the advantages of competitiveness.

In this context, the very important forums held during the past year, which sought to advance the development agenda, were both timely and welcome. At Doha last November, there was some acknowledgement of the wide differences in levels of development and capacity of States, and the consequential need for special and differential treatment for developing countries. We look forward to having these principles incorporated into the architecture of World Trade Organization rules. This, for us, would be an important step in pursuing a development dimension within the trade agenda. Since trade is the engine of development, it is vital that real opportunities be made available in export markets for developing country products, without the barriers, in various forms, which continue to hamper market access and restrict the expansion of exports.

There should also be significant strengthening of productive capacity through new investment and capital transfers to developing countries. At Monterrey in March, we sought to put in place a framework for the more effective mobilization of resources for development from many critical sources. Some indications were given of ODA increases, which we welcome, although these still fall below the agreed targets. In the absence of a system of global governance that would assure equity in investment opportunity and protection from the volatility of private financial flows, official sources of finance remain a critical form of development assistance. It is, therefore, important that these new resources are made available to achieve concrete results without the complications of conditionalities and selective processing.

As we pursue implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Agenda, we also look forward to progress in the democratization of the decision-making process within the international system for finance and trade. For it is only when developing countries are accorded fair space and an effective voice in the setting of international finance and trade policies that we will begin to see greater equity in the distribution of the world's wealth.

Most recently, in Johannesburg, we embraced a new opportunity to advance the sustainable development agenda by furthering progress in the implementation of Agenda 21. We welcome the important new targets agreed, which give fuller expression to the commitment of the international community to the Millennium Development Goals. The real test will be to see whether the commitments are translated into action, through the mobilization of resources, to meet the requirements of the programme and the targets that have been set. Johannesburg is thus the climax of an important year that reshaped and refocused the development priorities of the global community for the new millennium. For sustainable development will not be achieved without financing for development, nor without a development agenda in trade. Jamaica welcomes in particular the commitments made at Johannesburg in respect of small island developing States (SIDS). We continue to underscore the need for special attention to be paid to the challenges of vulnerability faced by SIDS. What is needed is a fair opportunity to secure the welfare of our people, and to protect our fragile environment.

This cannot be achieved without the full support of the international community. The Barbados Programme of Action, adopted in 1994, represented that commitment of support. As we now prepare to review its implementation in 2004, we encourage

renewed engagement on those issues critical to our very survival, such as the dangers posed by global warming, sea level rise and natural disasters.

Jamaica welcomes the positive indications for Africa, where the reduction of political conflict and turmoil offers a real opportunity for building stability and economic progress. Africa has suffered for far too long from a myriad of difficult problems and should be given a new start.

The formation of the African Union and the inauguration of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) are commendable initiatives aimed at bringing Africa closer to the mainstream of international development, at containing the HIV/AIDS pandemic and at combating the spread of poverty. What are really needed now are resources and we urge that every effort be made to ensure that the new initiatives achieve a breakthrough for African development.

In the field of social development and human rights, the United Nations has made significant achievements in extending and promoting the rights of persons in vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Notwithstanding those achievements, the Organization is faced with growing social challenges, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which threaten to reverse decades of progress in many parts of the world. Concerted action to control the spread of this disease should remain a priority of the Organization. So too should be the protection of the rights of children. The specific time-bound targets adopted during the special session on children require our unequivocal commitment.

One of the important areas of contribution on the part of the United Nations is in the development of international law as a means of promoting universally accepted rules and the creation of multilateral legal regimes to achieve common goals. The most recent achievement is the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court (ICC), which came into force in July 2002.

Another outstanding example is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This year, the international community will be observing the 20th Anniversary of its signing, which took place at Montego Bay, Jamaica on 10 December 1982. The immense significance of this Convention in safeguarding the interests of all countries, in the exploitation of ocean resources, and in maritime issues has been widely acknowledged.

We applaud the work being carried out by the two institutions that have evolved out of the Convention — the International Seabed Authority (ISA), which is entrusted with the implementation of the concept of the common heritage of mankind, and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which is the forum for resolving maritime disputes under the Convention.

This is a good example of the result of working together to achieve common solutions through a multilateral process to advance the common interest. It shows that the United Nations is working. We should safeguard and strengthen it as the guardian of our common future.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.